

KCTCS GOOD NEWS REPORT

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JANUARY 2012



ASPEN INSTITUTE NAMES WKCTC TOP FIVE COMMUNITY COLLEGE IN AMERICA CHOSEN FROM NATION'S 1,200 COMMUNITY COLLEGES

West Kentucky Community and Technical College (WKCTC) was named a "Finalist with Distinction" by the Aspen Institute's College Excellence Program. WKCTC was awarded a trophy and \$100,000 as part of the Aspen Prize fund, at the National Press Club in Washington, D.C., on December 12.

"This is an incredible honor for WKCTC and our System. I commend Dr. Veazey and the entire WKCTC family on receiving this much-deserved recognition," said KCTCS President Michael B. McCall.

The announcement follows a rigorous, yearlong effort by The Aspen Institute to assemble and review an unprecedented collection of data

on community colleges and the critical elements of student success: student learning, degree completion and transfer, and equity and employment/earnings after college.

This is the first national recognition of extraordinary accomplishments at individual community colleges. The Prize celebrates these top performers, thereby elevating the community college sector nationwide and helping other institutions understand how to improve outcomes for the seven million students—nearly half of all undergraduates in postsecondary education—working toward degrees and certificates in community colleges.



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WKCTC President Barbara Veazey thanked the Aspen Institute and its donors for creating the award and bringing recognition to community colleges across the nation. "This recognition shows that set criteria have been used, data has been evaluated, and specific results have been shown for the work done by so many outstanding community colleges," Veazey said. "We've tried to give a voice to the many success stories we share each day, but this recognition has allowed them to be shared at a national level."



The Honorable John Engler, left, and the Honorable Richard Riley present The Aspen Institute's "Finalist with Distinction Award" to WKCTC President Barbara Veazey.

The announcement involved leaders from across the fields of education, business, labor, and philanthropy, including Second Lady Dr. Jill Biden, a longtime educator; Secretary of Education Arne Duncan; Aspen Institute President and CEO and Steve Jobs' biographer Walter Isaacson; John Engler, former Governor of Michigan and President of the Business Roundtable; and highly respected former Secretary of Education and South Carolina Governor Richard Riley.

The naming of the winner follows an announcement of the 10 finalists in September and the project's unveiling at the White House Community College Summit in October 2010.

ABOUT WEST KENTUCKY COMMUNITY AND TECHNICAL COLLEGE

WKCTC's graduation/transfer rate significantly exceeds the national average, achieved through an astonishing 23 percent improvement over five recent years. The college achieves excellence by focusing equally on improving student learning in core skills—overhauling reading instruction and remedial math—and thoughtfully connecting programs to regional jobs, from credentials that fuel a large health care sector to the nation's first Marine Technology associate's degree.

"West Kentucky Community and Technical College's jump in graduation and transfers is astonishing. It's incredibly rare in higher education. And the improvements are serving students equitably. The three year graduation and transfer rate for minorities is 24 percent above the national average. These results are inspiring," said Aspen's Wyner.

Improving student learning has helped WKCTC graduate more students

with the knowledge they need to secure jobs or transfer to four-year schools. National experts called WKCTC's processes for assessing and improving learning outcomes "excellent." They were especially impressed with faculty efforts to use and act on learning gaps revealed by commonly administered tests and a curriculum-wide initiative to boost students' reading skills. Partly as a result of this program, evidence shows students who transfer to four-year schools from WKCTC do better in their junior and senior years than other Kentucky students.

"By working across the college to improve student learning and skills,

WKCTC has accomplished amazing things for its students," said Wyner. "College leaders and instructors across campus take responsibility for improving student learning and work hard to identify and eliminate barriers to student success. Their record shows one thing very clearly: the strategy is working."

The colleges designated "Finalists with Distinction" include: Lake Area Technical Institute (Watertown, SD); Miami Dade College (Miami, FL); Walla Walla Community College (Walla Walla, WA); and West Kentucky Community and Technical College (Paducah, KY). The top prize winner, Valencia College, received \$600,000.

The original pool of 1,200 community colleges was pared to 120 in April, based on a data formula created with assistance of an expert advisory committee. The data focused on college completion, the improvement of completion performance over time, and equity for under-represented students, based primarily on institutional data submitted to the federal government annually.

Earlier this year, The Aspen Institute College Excellence Program selected seven other KCTCS colleges among the nation's 120 best community colleges—top 10 percent in the country. The colleges include: Ashland Community and Technical College, Big Sandy Community and Technical College, Hazard Community and Technical College, Madisonville Community College, Maysville Community and Technical College, Somerset Community College and Southeast Kentucky Community and Technical College.



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